

# FORUM

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## Potential problems

I am addressing two potential problems concerning gate security and troop welfare. First, gate security: I was amazed when they moved the Gibson Gate adjacent to several of the most populated areas on the base and to completely expose the school to anyone.

Then I looked at the lights on the gates. Except when mobile floods are used to augment the security posture, the guards are the ones illuminated, not people or vehicles approaching the entrance. Someone might look at this problem and decide who needs to be lit up and how to do it.

Second, headgear: I fully appreciate the role of various berets in the desire to promote esprit de corps and to easily identify selected personnel. Still, even the Army special forces and Rangers are seldom seen in berets in the field or on operations. They usually elect to wear a headgear that best supports the mission: one that addresses the tactical situation, meets the job being executed and accommodates the local environment.

That brings me to the headgear for the gate guards. Both the Airmen and the Soldiers are wearing their respective berets. They look OK and keep the sun off the top of their heads, however, neither beret is any good at keeping the wearer cool, protected from the sun nor shades the eyes.

Berets just collect heat. The vents are small and better for draining water than ventilating the wearers' head with the short hair styles worn by the men there is no protection for the face, side of the head or the neck. If you do not think this is important just talk to the local dermatologists and see what they have to say about skin cancer and associated problems.

These berets do not shade the eyes, and even sunglasses are affected by glare and do not always



**COL. HENRY L. ANDREWS, JR.**  
377th Air Base Wing commander

do a good enough job of allowing good vision during bright sunlight.

So, I would recommend that the troops pulling gate security and patrol be allowed to wear either the regular battle dress uniform cap, a distinctive "baseball" style cap or a local purchase hat like the "bush" style hat. The latter two provide the best protection and accommodate the environment the best while shading the wearer's eyes to promote their vision.

We appreciate your concern for the team that guards our gates and patrols our installation. The decision to relocate the Gibson Gate was made to reduce the traffic congestion at the Louisiana and Gibson intersection.

These two arteries into the base

were a contributing factor to many major accidents when the gate was located near that intersection.

The gate was moved back to provide easier traffic flow onto the base and allow people who have no base affiliation to access Wherry Elementary School without requiring special passes to the base.

A contract has been negotiated to improve the lighting and security at the installation entry control points. The design for the project includes ballistic hardening of the facilities as well. The majority of our gates will be refitted to meet current antiterrorism/force protection standards. Work should be complete by April.

The majority of security forces and Army personnel wear the beret with a great deal of pride. The beret is distinctive headgear that separates and identifies security forces personnel as "protectors of the force."

It is also required wear when in garrison. It is the only approved form of headgear for security forces personnel when wearing the blue uniform.

We share your concern about the harmful rays of the sun and have therefore ensured sunglasses and sunscreen are available to protect the troops from the sun.

## Not all tax free

**Why is sales tax charged at the Barber Shop and the Dry Cleaners?**

The previous bases I have been stationed at or worked at while on temporary duty do not charge sales tax. I was under the impression that the Army and Air Force Exchange Service was tax free.

You are correct. BX, Shoppette and Mini-Mall customers do not pay tax on purchases; however, customers are required to pay taxes at concessionaire-owned businesses.

The Dry Cleaners and the Barber Shop are concessionaires and must comply with New Mexico state tax laws, which is why you are required to pay taxes. Most states require the collection of sales taxes by military exchange concessionaires.

## No fire extinguishers?

**I was wondering why fire extinguishers aren't provided for base housing residents.**

I talked to the housing personnel and they said that fire extinguishers were never issued and it was never a requirement.

TEAM KIRTLAND takes fire prevention and safety very seriously and we are committed to a safe and comfortable community. While fire extinguishers are not provided, there are several fire safety mechanisms in place for each home.

Every house is equipped with a smoke detector that will, in most cases, provide enough early warning to safely evacuate the home. Each gas appliance is inspected and passes a safety check before a new resident moves in.

Under the new housing contract, you will benefit from annual inspections and safety checks of all gas appliances in your home.

As always, if there is a mechanical or safety failure of any appliance, the Kirtland Family Housing maintenance team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to meet your needs.

In addition, each home is provided a carbon monoxide detector. This device will detect carbon monoxide and sound an audible and visual alarm if harmful levels are present. Should this occur, leave the house and phone the Fire Department and Kirtland AFB Family Housing from the nearest phone.

The Housing Rules and Regulations (pages 13-15) also have key fire prevention tips. Two Web sites that offer additional resources on fire prevention are the National Fire Protection Association at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org), and its counterpart for kids, Sparky the Fire Dog at [www.sparky.org](http://www.sparky.org).

The bottom line: if you have a fire in your home, do not attempt to extinguish it yourself. Evacuate your home and call 911 from the nearest telephone.

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### Clinic problems

I have 24 years of active duty service and have never seen a worse managed hospital.

I have to get a flight physical every year. But the schedule is only open two weeks in advance. Having the schedule open only two weeks in advance is not compatible with the rest of the Air Force which has to do everything months in advance.

It should be opened at least one month in advance. In a perfect world a quarter ahead. Flight Medicine seems to be the worst.

Why does the rest of the government work overtime with the exception of the hospital (I know there are a few of the doctors and emergency people who do). At 4 p.m. the hospital has an echo—this was a quote from a civilian hospital employee.

Training day is the third Thursday every month. This is a great idea. The problem is the parking lot is empty and I see a lot of hospital personnel in civilian clothes during duty hours.

How are they doing training if they are not in class or at the hospital?

If the training days are not all day training then a couple hours of overtime would save both time and money. This would also give us more hours to get people appointments.

Flight Medicine's routine appointment schedule is open one month in advance. With your leave followed by an immediate temporary duty, this narrowed the scheduling window for you. Our Flight Medicine team should have accommodated you and we apologize this did not occur.

As a reminder, Flight Medicine customers may book and complete a flight physical five months prior to their birth month and are encouraged to do so as early as possible, to avoid the risk of non-currency due to last-minute temporary duties.

The medical group duty hours are 7 a.m.-4 p.m. The last scheduled appointment is usually at 3:45 p.m., except on Wednesdays due to mandatory physical fitness activities in the late afternoon. Most patients are seen by 4:30 p.m. Behind the scenes, however, are a plethora of physicians catching up on notes, reviewing test results, and making phone calls.

Meanwhile, the pharmacy team fills prescriptions and other technicians prepare for the next duty day. We have surgeons on call after hours and on weekends. Plus, we have several members currently deployed and more coming and going all the time.

To address your last concern, the medical group is closed for training on the third Thursday of each month.

On this day, all medical group personnel are in some type of train-

ing, whether in the clinic or elsewhere on base. The staff parks in the three east rows of the parking lot. On training day, those rows are generally filled. The remainder of the parking lot is largely empty, with the exception of patients picking up prescriptions.

Of the 360 personnel employed by the medical group, nearly one-third are civil servants and contractors. These personnel also report for duty and participate in scheduled training on training day, but in civilian attire (as you would suspect).

Thank you for expressing your concerns. Please know that the professionals of the 377th Medical Group are dedicated to providing high-quality health care to all eligible beneficiaries.

### Turn lights on

I am concerned about the number of motorists who drive into the base at night and forget to turn their lights on. This evening I was almost T-boned at the intersection of Wyoming and West Sandia circle because the motorist had no lights on and was speeding.

The vehicle wasn't visible until it was almost at the intersection. By that time it was too late. Luckily, it missed me, but maybe the next person won't be so lucky.

Driving into the base and not turning the headlights back on is a common occurrence. I see it all the time, but the majority of these people only turn their headlights off when entering the base. The running lights remain on. This isn't as bad because the car is at least visible at night.

Drivers normally dim their headlights when they approach the installation gates as a courtesy to our gate guards. This is done to help minimize the affect bright lights have on a sentry's night vision.

Drivers who forget to turn on the their headlights after entering the base increase their chances of having a vehicle accident. To minimize this potential hazard, the security forces commander has instructed the gate guards to remind drivers to turn their headlights back on as they pass through entry control gates.

### Forum

We want your suggestions and comments concerning Kirtland AFB.

However, may we also suggest giving base agencies or the chain of command the chance to resolve your concern before calling Forum.

If you decide the Forum is the right answer, we don't print callers' names.

### Customer service

Chapel, 846-5691  
CE Help Desk, 846-8222  
Commissary, 846-9586  
Computer help, 846-5926  
Energy wasting, 846-4633  
Exchange Service, 266-9887  
Family Services, 846-0741  
Finance, 846-8045, 846-6639  
Law Enforcement, 846-7926  
Legal Services, 846-4217  
Medical Clinic, 846-3406  
Services Squadron, 846-1828

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Kirtland AFB, NM 87117